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Editor's Note

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EDITOR'S NOTE:

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Fisk University, a prestigious Black institution in existence for 118 years, is in danger of closing its doors forever due to burdensome debts and escalating operating costs. Unless, of course, something is done soon to deal with the crisis through a national effort.

At a meeting convened by Howard President James E. Cheek last December 17, strong action was taken toward the effort to save Fisk: A National Committee for the Preservation of Fisk University was formed, with the goal of raising at least \$5 million.

Attending that historically-significant meeting at Howard were 70 members of the national Black leadership, including Walter J. Leonard, president of Fisk University.

To spearhead and coordinate the Fisk rescue fund drive, a top-notch panel was organized whose members include: Actor Ossie Davis; Thaddeus Garrett, Jr., former aide to Vice President George Bush; activist Dick Gregory; Dorothy I. Height, president of the National Council of Negro Women; Carl Holman, president of the National Urban Coalition and John E. Jacob, president of the National Urban League. Howard's president was chosen to chair the committee.

To brighten the day, and the occasion, James Cheek handed over to Leonard more than \$14,000 that was raised in just one week from Howard University faculty and staff.

More than \$34,000, including the above figure, has been donated or pledged by members of the university community as of February.

In the same spirit, and recognizing the significance of this national effort to rescue a Black institution, Howard's radio station—WHUR-FM—conducted a one-day on-the-air fund-raising effort on February 7 that netted nearly \$60,000 for Fisk.

The Howard effort is likely to be duplicated by other groups and organizations across the country to help clear Fisk's outstanding debts of about \$2.8 million and help save the institution.

Alumni and friends of Howard, or anyone else wishing to lend a hand and join the campaign to let Fisk live may send checks payable to Fisk University, in care of the Office of the President, Box UR, Howard University, Washington, D.C. 20059.

The campaign spearheaded by Howard's president translates into action the words he had spoken or written in years past. One passage comes to mind: "Some educational experts and social commentators have characterized our Black colleges and universities as the 'wastelands' of American higher education.

"In what they have done and in what they are, and in what they represent, I consider them to be OASES IN AMERICA'S DESERTS OF OPPRESSION. They have not only educated the vast majority of our people, but they have enriched our Black communities." Indeed. (See "Undoing the Yoke of Bondage in America," New Directions, January 1981.)

As for the historic place of Fisk University, and the role it yet may play in not letting minds go to waste, the following—excerpted from an address by Howard's vice president for academic affairs at Fisk's opening convocation last September 8—tells the story: